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ABSTRACT

The New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing developed a Saturday writing class for adult literacy students. The class design also provided an opportunity to train volunteers and professional teachers in this model of writing instruction. One project goal was to formulate suggestions for others setting up such courses, which follow. The writing workshop/course should be adapted to be context specific. Its design should be consistent with the overall goals of the program. Two important considerations are the level of the students to whom priority will be given and students who can be helped. Sufficient time should be allocated for recruitment of the teaching team, students, and tutors/teachers. An intake procedure should be planned that provides students the opportunity to meet each other and the instructors and to identify the kinds of writing they are working on and the kinds they would like to learn. An atmosphere should be fostered in which teachers can plan the course organization in a way that makes sense to them and is consistent with the program's instructional philosophy. The instructional approaches should be consistent with the overall program philosophy and goals. Both ongoing and final assessment should be built into the educational program. The plan for the tutor/teacher participants should include concerns expressed by the group and wide experience in writing, discussion, and reading. Program improvements include additional recruitment efforts and investigation of the writing process of adult literacy students. (YLB)

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The New York Public Library
Centers for Reading and Writing

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR COMBINING WRITING INSTRUCTION AND TEACHER/TUTOR EDUCATION IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Project Background

The New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing received a grant through Library Services and Construction Act Funds to set up a Saturday writing class in the Bronx and Manhattan. Our goals were two-fold. On the one hand, we hoped to provide an additional opportunity for students already enrolled in literacy programs to get additional writing instruction, and to reach students who were currently not being served through the existing network of programs in New York City--those students whose reading is too advanced for literacy programs, but whose writing prevents them from entering the City University system or taking the composing section for the General Education Diploma (GED) In addition, we hoped to provide an opportunity for a small number of volunteers and professional teachers to extend their knowledge of the writing process and approaches to teaching writing through attending the class and participating in a one-hour discussion after each session. Specifically, we had planned to:

- Make intensive writing instruction available on Saturdays to adult literacy students who cannot attend lessons during the working week, and to students already in library and other literacy/ABE programs who want accelerated hours of writing instruction.

- Make writing instruction more easily available to inexperienced writers who at the same time are closed out of traditional literacy/ABE programs because they have advanced reading skills.

- Train 18-25 teachers and volunteer tutors from The New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing and participating agencies in this model of writing instruction.

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•Prepare trainees to replicate the training component in their own home learning settings, if they choose to train others in this approach to teaching writing.

•Develop and distribute a written blueprint of this teaching/training model for library literacy programs and other literacy service providers using volunteers or paid professional staff.

As one of the goals of the project, we had planned to prepare a "blueprint" that other programs might find useful in thinking through the issues in setting up a writing course for students in conjunction with a tutor/teacher education program. The blueprint--this text--attempts to provide both our recommendations to others and our own experiences with the project.

•The writing workshop-course, like any other educational program needs to be context specific.

Therefore, replicating the same writing workshop-course we did in another context probably won't work very well. Serious thought needs to be given to the goals of the students and tutors/teachers participating, and the relationship of the writing program to the overall educational goals of the agency. What we've tried to give here, is some sense of the issues to think about in setting up a program, and our own experience in some detail.

•Make the design of the workshop-course consistent with the overall goals of the program.

The Centers for Reading and Writing uses a whole language approach in it's instruction. As Altwerger, Edelsky and Flores point out in their recent article, "Whole Language: What's New?" whole language is based on several assumptions about language:

> *...(a) language is for making meanings, for accomplishing purposes, (b) written language is language--thus what is true for language in general is true for written language; (c) the cuing systems of language (phonology in oral, orthography in*

written language, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics) are always simultaneously present and interacting in any instance of language in use; (d) language use always occurs in a situation; (e) situations are critical to meaning-making...

(Altwerger, Edelsky, and Flores, page 145)

The major theoretical premise, they continue, is that language must be acquired through use--not through practicing the parts of language and putting them together at a later time. Therefore, most of the reading and writing students do in the classroom involves materials that are not specifically designed for reading and writing instruction--but rather reflect a variety of materials found in the community. (Altwerger, Edelsky, and Flores, page 145)

In addition to the recent work done in the area of whole language, much of the philosophy and teaching strategies draws upon work done in the area of writing instruction. The body of literature in the teaching of writing is extensive and diverse and includes studies of the composing process of both young children and college students writing at the basic level, strategies for encouraging reading/writing connections, and ways to use writing as a learning tool in other subjects. This body of research has had an impact on how writing is taught in many schools and has significantly influenced the way writing teachers are educated. The Bay Area Writing Project--and later the National Writing Project-- arose from these concerns about writing instruction.

Although the insights of the research and experiences of teacher education projects are used by some adult literacy teachers, these teaching approaches are not widespread. Since our program uses the whole language philosophy as a theoretical underpinning for the program, we felt eager to set up the Saturday writing class using and extending the insights we had gained in other parts of our program.

•Consider what level students you would like to give priority to in your course and which students you can help .

Writing courses attract people of many different proficiency levels in writing; it's important to consider the group your agency wants to serve, although it may not be possible to refine your entrance guidelines until seeing an initial group of students who express interest.

Highest priority

•students already enrolled in a weekday reading or GED program--this was because we felt that 3 hours once a week (in the Saturday writing class) constitutes minimal instruction, but 3 hours added to another 4-9 weekday hours constitutes a substantial program.

•students who could not attend weekday classes because of home or work commitments--although 3 hours is limited, we felt we should take students who had not previously been able to attend adult education classes because of weekday commitments. We stressed to these students that they would need to do a lot between classes to make the program effective for them.

•students who were able to generate a short text--two or three sentences and read back what they wrote. (This was because we felt that a student who was more basic than this would have trouble getting enough help in this type of class. We referred the basic beginners to the tutorial program at the site where the class took place.)

•students who seemed to be falling through the gaps of existing services--in other words, students who were too advanced in reading for most literacy students but too inexperienced with writing to enter one of the City University classes.

•students who wanted help preparing for the GED writing sample.

Lower Priority

•students who already have their GED or who have had some college

education--our reasoning was that there are other kinds of educational opportunities available at that level

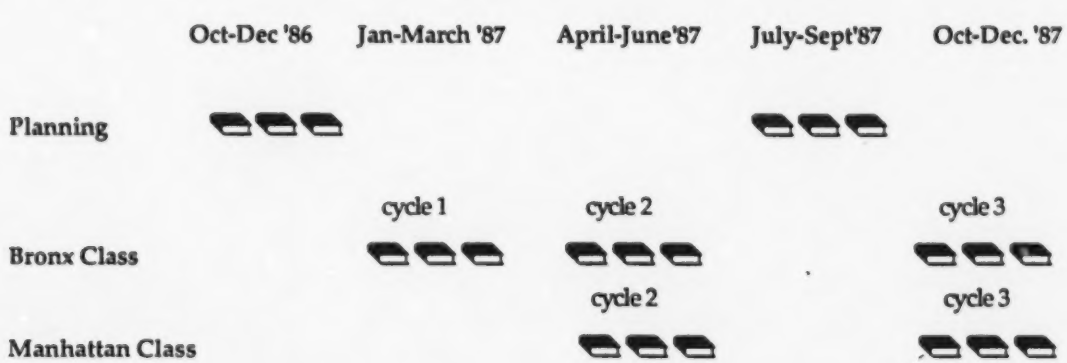
•Recruitment of the teaching team, and both the students and tutor/teachers who participate in the course takes a substantial amount of time.

In our original grant, we had included a three month planning period, from October-December 1987.

The timeline for this project called for a start-up period from October 1986-December 1986 in which we planned to interview and hire a co-teaching team for each of the Bronx and Manhattan locations, and conduct the publicity for both students and teachers/volunteers. During this period we also planned to meet with teachers to make more specific plans for the design of the instructional program.

In January of 1987, we planned to begin the Bronx course, which was scheduled to continue for three cycles: 1) January 1987-March; 2) April-June, and October-December. The Manhattan class was scheduled to start in April and run simultaneously with the Bronx class for cycles two and three. We had not planned to conduct the writing classes during the summer, but did plan for a review and planning period for the fall classes.

Timeline



Planning Period--October-December 1987

•**Recruitment, interviewing and hiring teachers**--In order to recruit the four teachers needed for the two co-working teams in each borough, we advertised in The New York Times--Sunday education section as well as The Amsterdam News--a major Black newspaper, and several smaller community papers. In addition, we described the positions in the Literacy Assistance Center calendar, a monthly publication which reaches approximately 2000 adult literacy practitioners, program directors, and others interested in the issue of literacy. We also sent a mailing to the directors of other literacy programs we were aware of--a variety of community-based organizations, the literacy programs sponsored by the City University system, the literacy programs sponsored by the Board of Education and a selected group of college placement offices.

Our recruitment efforts were successful in attracting a large number of applicants, although a much smaller number of people had the kind of experience teaching writing we were looking for. We interviewed approximately 25 applicants and scheduled a second, follow-up interview for those few candidates that interested us the most. Out of this group invited for second interviews, we choose four teachers who we believed had solid experience teaching writing and also experience working with adults--either in a literacy program or in teaching basic writing at the college level.

•**Recruitment of students**--in order to recruit students for the programs, we sent flyers describing the writing course to the literacy programs mentioned above. In addition, we asked the Literacy Assistance Center to include a description of their course in their monthly calendar. We also distributed flyers within our own program sites in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island.

We got a substantial response to our recruitment efforts--approximately 80 people expressed interest in the Bronx course, and by the time the Manhattan course started in April, approximately 50 people had expressed an interest in attending. At the time students called, we let them know that we would be contacting people for intake interviews near the start of the course in the order they called us, but that we would most likely not be able to accept everyone who had expressed interest.

As time went on, we did less direct recruitment for the classes since we still had a fairly substantial list of people wanting to attend, and we had started routinely asking people if they were interested in the Saturday class when they called any of our reading and writing centers.

Students Participating in the Course

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
The Bronx	25	24	15
Manhattan		17	25

Total--106

• **Recruitment of teachers/tutors to attend the course as trainees**--We advertised the opportunity for teachers and volunteers to participate in the course in a similar way--through agency contacts, the Literacy Assistance Center newsletter and through our own program.

Although we have been somewhat successful in attracting teachers and tutors for the course, we have not had a large number of inquiries from outside the program. The majority of participants have come from the group of volunteers calling the library to become volunteer tutors. Although we are not sure why the response from outside the program had been so small given the relatively few opportunities for adult literacy teachers to get this type of training, several people had initially expressed interest brought up the problem of being available for 13 consecutive Saturdays. This could be part of the problem, although other agencies who provide free workshops for teachers have also been experiencing some difficulty getting a response.

Teachers/Tutors Participating in the Course

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
The Bronx	4	2	5
Manhattan		2	5

Total--18

• Plan for an intake procedure that provides students with a chance to meet each other, the instructors, and enables them to identify the kinds of writing they already are working on--if any--and the kinds of writing they would like to be able to do.

At the beginning of each cycle, the two teachers called prospective students from the waiting list to set up appointments for a Saturday preceding the start of the class. Students met with either one of the teachers. The interview provided an opportunity to find out about the student's experiences with writing--in particular, the student's experiences and attitudes toward writing as well as their goals for the course. We also asked people to complete a prompted writing sample, a sample in which we gave students a choice of three topics to respond to. In cycles 1 and 2, we also administered an informal reading inventory with passages at various levels of difficulty and a standardized reading test. We dropped the reading test in cycle 3 because it required using teaching time for additional testing and did not seem to be providing us with enough useful information to merit continuing it.

• Provide an atmosphere where teachers can plan the course organization in a way that makes sense to them as long as it is consistent with the program's instructional philosophy.

The classes in the Bronx and Manhattan, of course, were not identical to each other because of differences in the styles of the teaching teams and the

variation in groups of students. We encouraged teachers to organize the class in ways that were comfortable to both them and their students, but wanted the classes to reflect the philosophy and goals of the overall program.

The Bronx teachers decided, for example, that:

> *...the most realistic and important goal for our program was for students to develop an awareness about the writing process, and to see themselves as 'writers,' and to have fun with writing. Many students' experience of writing has been negative. They tend to come into the literacy program with low self-esteem. They do not perceive themselves as capable of writing, nor do they see writing as anything that could be fun. Part of this is because the predominant teaching model that most students have been exposed to stresses what Brian Street calls the autonomous model, a model of traditional education in which students are passive learners, work in isolation and the teacher is an authority. There is an emphasis on students' deficiencies, and genuine expression of one's voice and uses of language is discouraged.*
>
> (Greenfield and Schwertman, page 4)

• Use instructional approaches consistent with the overall program philosophy and goals.

Although it sounds obvious, it's important to consider whether the actual classroom activities can accomplish the programs's goals. For example, if the program seeks to encourage critical thought on the part of students but spends most of it's time working on spelling, the goals of the program don't get accomplished.

•Encourage teachers to organize the class in a way that reflects both student concerns and program goals.

In addition to considering the program philosophy and goals, it's important to consider the concerns and issues students express in designing the course.

Because many students--at least in the beginning of the course--tend to be especially concerned with the mechanics of writing, it is important to include work in this area while at the same time encouraging students to write widely, and develop strategies for getting feedback on their writing.

Teachers tended to handle this tension by encouraging broad writing throughout the class, but also by devoting some time to the teaching of mechanics both at the beginning of the course as well as the last third. The Bronx teachers, for example, structured the class in a way that enabled them to concentrate on various aspects of the writing process:

> *The 13 Saturdays (3 months) were divided up as follows. We decided that at the end of each month, we would spend half of a Saturday class having a writing celebration with the entire class. After each monthly celebration, the student's work was typed up, bound into publication, and duplicated for everyone to have a copy of their own. The lessons in the first month were aimed at introducing student to the different stages of the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing), and getting students started on a piece of writing that they really care about. The second month is aimed at introducing some important strategies or writer's tips that will help expand students' awareness of what is possible. This includes encouraging students to share among themselves the collective wealth of knowledge that they already have as writers. For example, many students already have some effective strategies for generating ideas, or revising, or editing. Other lessons are devoted to talk about description, where writers get ideas from, freewriting, how to organize the ideas in an essay, how to write a good lead, strategies for revision, etc.*
>
> *The third month is devoted more to addressing some of the mechanics of writing which students typically have difficulties with. For example, paragraphing, spelling, punctuation, etc. Editing and proofreading skills are also reviewed. In the last month, we also formed some interest*

groups so that students could break into groups and work on more specific goals. For example, we formed a GED group for students who wanted to know how to write the GED essay. Other students met to learn more about spelling and punctuation. A third group met to work on writing business letters.

(Greenfield and Schwertman, page 4-5)

Some of the instructional approaches we chose that are consistent with the whole language philosophy include:

Substantial amounts of writing time--in keeping with the whole language viewpoint that people learn to read and write primarily through experience reading and writing, substantial parts of the class were spent with people working on their own writing. During writing, the teachers leading the class and well as the teachers and tutors attending as trainees joined in the writing for a portion of the time and held individual conferences with students during a portion of the writing time. During the writing time, students were encouraged to spell words as best they could by how they sound rather than asking the teachers or other students for spellings or looking words up in the dictionary.

Individual conferences--During these conferences, teachers helped students with their writing. A conference might include help finding a topic to write about, a discussion about possible revisions in the piece, or some help with editing (spelling and punctuation) if the piece of writing was otherwise completed. Teachers also encouraged students to have conferences with each other.

Writing folders--although not really an instructional approach, individual writing folders provide a way of helping students keep track of their own development in writing, and encourage people to continue working on one piece over time. Rather than handing writing in to teachers, students kept their writing in folders--making copies in order to bring the current piece home to work on. In addition to the individual and group feedback on

writing in the class, teachers would occasionally leave written responses to students' writing in their folders.

Opportunities to get feedback from other students--students had frequent opportunities to find out how others were responding to their writing as they were working on it. Small and large groups of students met regularly to read drafts of pieces to each other and find out what others in the group liked about the writing and to offer suggestions for making the piece clearer or more powerful. The writer is encouraged to listen carefully to all the feedback from other students and teachers but can make the final decision about whether or not to change the writing and how to change it.

Collaborative projects--From time to time, students worked in small groups on topics of particular interest. For example, in the Bronx class, a group of students decided to work on the issue of housing. This included discussion on the issue, learning to use the resources of the library to get additional information on the subject and interviewing a person who had been homeless in the past who visited the class and described her experiences.

Short lessons on aspects of writing--these lessons concentrated on topics of interest to the group that came up in the writing. Topics included: strategies for deciding what to write about, strategies for making revisions, spelling, paragraphing, and punctuation. Often students were asked to apply something taught to a piece of writing in their folder. For example, a lesson on spelling might ask people to choose some words from their writing that they would like to learn how to spell.

Short lessons on connections between reading and writing--the teachers also planned activities to make the connection between reading and writing more explicit. A typical lesson, for example, might include talking about the way good description can help a piece of writing. Students would then look for examples of what they considered to be effective descriptions from books they were currently reading or other books in the classroom. From there, they might talk about ways to use description in the writing they were working on.

Journals--some of the classes used journals as an additional learning tool. The journals were used for people to write down their own observations about their writing. For example, people might write down how they go about finding a topic, what they observe about how they make revisions, or

strategies for finding something to write about. In addition, the journals serve as a place to jot down thoughts and observations which can later be developed into full pieces of writing.

Celebrations--from time to time, there were opportunities for students and teachers to read completed pieces of writing to each other. At this point, the goal was to hear and enjoy each other's work, rather than providing suggestions for the writer. Students and teachers generally brought in food for these celebrations to help create a festive atmosphere.

Publications--classes put out several publications. These publications contained writing from the class and was distributed to each student as well as sent to other tutoring sites within the program. Through the publications, we hoped that students would enjoy seeing their own writing in print as well as reading the writing of their classmates. We also hoped that the publication would inspire people to want to write more and to submit one of their pieces of writing the next time around.

•Build both ongoing and final assessment into the educational program

Ongoing assessment of student writing was done jointly by both students and teachers as part of the instruction. Conferences, journals, and the writing folders provided the tools for this type of assessment. To us, this kind of assessment is the most valuable because it provides useful information to both students and teachers as the class is in progress.

But we were also interested in looking at writing improvement in a more formal way. Since it is generally accepted that direct measures of student writing, such as writing samples, provide a more accurate assessment measure than indirect measures, such as tests of the skills of writing--vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation. As the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory states in it's book, *Direct Measures of Writing Skill: Issues and Applications:*

...When resources and expertise are available, it is generally acknowledged that the best way to assess writing skills is through the direct assessment approach--that is, by having students write. The purpose of direct

assessment is to simulate--under controlled conditions--commonly encountered writing circumstances and to evaluate examinee performance within those circumstances.

(Spandel and Stiggins, pages 7-8)

The type of direct assessment we chose to use was *holistic scoring*. In order to do this, we asked each student to write on a choice of three topics at the beginning of the cycle and then once again at the end of the cycle. Students were given up to 1 hour to write on the topic of their choice and were encouraged to spell words as best as they were able.

In order to score the first group of papers, the two Bronx teachers--who were familiar with this type of assessment--conducted a session involving other staff people, some of whom had done holistic scoring before and others who were new to the procedures. The group of us looked at some of the group's writing samples in order to identify levels of competence in writing ranging from 1 to 4. We tried to find the range of writing within that group. Consistent with procedures for this kind of assessment, we tried to get a whole view of a piece and did not single out individual aspects of writing such as word choice or punctuation. These four papers were our *rangefinders*, the papers we used to conduct the scoring of the pre and post samples.

Once we had our rangefinders identified, we read a mix of pre and post writing samples--not being aware of which was which-- and gave them a score of 1 to 4. The papers were scored with 4 or 5 raters, depending on the class. (Two raters is considered the minimum needed, although it's generally better to score with an odd number to break ties.)

Ideally, the overall class score should be higher at the post test than at the pre-test indicating that the group had moved up the scale over the course of the instruction. We generally found that the post samples got a higher score than the pre-test samples, indicating that the class as a whole improved their writing.

We feel, though, that the individual student folders are better indicators of writing improvement, because the pieces of writing in the folders represent a student's work on a piece over time. The assigned topic and time limit makes a holistic writing sample different from the kinds of writing generally done in class--untimed writing with a choice of topic.

We think we that we would get a more representative assessment using early and late pieces of writing in the course--not done specifically for an assessment--that would then be scored using the same procedures we followed for the prompted samples. There is little in the research, though, describing unprompted and untimed samples scored in this way. In the future we would like to be in touch with others using this type of assessment because we think it would be more suited to these classes. We are also experimenting with scoring a batch of prompted, timed samples and a batch of unprompted, untimed samples using the same rangefinders to see if we get differences in scores.

Reading Tests

In cycles 1 and 2, we also administered a short informal reading inventory asking people to read passages aloud and summarize what they had read. We also gave a pre and post silent reading test, the Degrees of Reading Power, a widely used modified cloze test. The test asks people to read fairly long passages with words omitted from the text. The student has to choose the best word from a choice of several words for each blank.

In administering this test, we hoped to see whether writing instruction resulted in an improvement in reading. After three cycles of giving this test, we stopped administering it. This was primarily because the combination of the interview, informal reading inventory, silent reading test, and writing sample was too much testing for students and took up a disproportionate amount of instructional time in a course this short. We cut back to those assessments we felt were the most important for a writing course--the interview and pre and post writing samples.

Students tested slightly better on the Degrees of Reading Power after 13 weeks of writing instruction. The improvement as indicated by the test, though, was minimal and not considered educationally significant on this measure. This might be because the bulk of the class time is spent specifically on

writing and there is relatively little direct instruction in reading. It could also be that the kind of improvement in reading that results from this type of class cannot be measured by this type of test. It may be that the kinds of changes that we hope students will gain from the class--such as looking at reading differently, from the viewpoint of a writer--is difficult to measure and a reading test is the wrong tool. Or it may be that the course is too short to show significant reading improvement.

•Like the plan for students, the plan for tutor/teacher participants should include both the concerns expressed by the group as well as wide experience in writing, discussion, and reading.

In addition to helping students with writing, the Writing Workshop Course also provided an opportunity for teachers and tutors to improve their instructional knowledge and skills. The teachers and tutors attended each writing class for the full three hours and then stayed an additional hour to work more specifically with the co-teaching team on instructional issues that come up in the teaching of writing. Tutors and teachers--in addition to discussing what went on in the class--also read and discussed articles and practiced specific teaching approaches. Some of the approaches used in working with teachers and tutors follow:

Participation in the class as writers--We believe that practice and experience with their own writing is a crucial part of learning to teach writing. This belief is reflected in the major teacher education programs in the area of writing. In the National Writing Project Network, a group of teacher-education projects originally modeled after the Bay Area Writing Project, a large proportion of the teachers time is spent getting them to write, discuss their own writing, and reflect on their writing strategies.

Our hope was that both students and teachers/tutors would benefit from this experience. Students would more likely view writing as an important pursuit if both the class co-teachers and the teacher/tutor participants wrote for a portion of the class time. In addition, it would provide an opportunity for students and teachers/tutors to realize first-hand that the problems writers face often cross skills levels. For example, all writers struggle with finding a topic, revising pieces, and finding a voice. To be sure, inexperienced writers may have a greater

number of problems with spelling and punctuation, but many issues remain consistent regardless of the level of writer. We also hoped that teachers/tutors who don't ordinarily write regularly would begin to develop and extend their writing strategies, therefore having more to share with students from their own experience as writers.

Classroom observations--From time to time, teachers/tutors were asked to observe particular aspects of the writing classroom. For example, they might be asked to observe one of the co-teachers conducting a writing conference or might observe a small group of students giving each other feedback on their writing. These directed observations were then discussed with the co-teachers and the other teachers/tutors in the after-class meeting.

Reading and discussing articles--Teachers and tutors were asked to read and discuss articles about the theoretical framework behind this approach to writing as well as articles providing some teaching strategies they could then use in their own setting.

Participating in learning activities--Occasionally, teachers and tutors were asked to participate in learning activities designed to demonstrate a particular principle in the teaching of writing. For example, teachers and tutors were asked to write for ten minutes following specific rules for creating prefixes for each noun and verb used in their writing. Through this activity, participants can discover firsthand the difficulty of trying to compose while being concerned with editing conventions at the same time.

Participating in teaching--As the cycle progressed, teachers/tutors were asked to take a more active role in teaching. This included having individual conferences with students, leading small group writing feedback sessions, or teaching a short lesson on a particular aspect of writing.

Exploring classroom applications--Teachers and tutors were encouraged to use and experiment with strategies for teaching writing that they might use in their own setting throughout the course.

Journals--like the students in the course, teachers and tutors used journals to record thoughts about their own writing process and ideas for pieces of writing.

In addition, though, they also used the journals to reflect on the teaching issues that came up for them in the after-class discussions and in their own teaching setting.

Design of the Teacher/Tutor Education Program

During some of the cycles, it was hard to encourage teachers and tutors to first participate in the class as writers and observers, rather than teachers. This desire to jump right in and start teaching seems to be a natural inclination, of course, for those of us who are used to teaching. Some teachers/tutors seemed to feel as though they weren't being useful if they didn't start teaching right away. Unfortunately, since many people teach writing primarily by correcting a student's mistakes, the kind of help the teachers and tutors offered at the beginning of the course, did not support what the co-teachers were trying to do.

The Bronx teachers tried to structure the course so that tutors and teachers had a changing role during the cycle:

> *The teachers' and tutors' roles evolved throughout the 13 week cycle. During the first month, they participated as students in the class session, focussing on their own writing, gaining insight into the writing process first hand. During the second month, they became researchers on the teaching of writing, carefully observing the instructors. During their hour alone, they also read and discussed the theory and practice of teaching writing, based on a variety of articles...and participated in learning activities designed to create an active learning situation.*
>
> *As the tutors gain confidence and skill during the last month, they begin conferencing with the students with the instructors observing. Later, they discuss their conferences, with the instructors providing constructive feedback. One difficult concept for the tutors to learn is that there are many different kinds of conferences, that each piece and each student is handled differently. Learning to really listen and ask where the student is in terms of the piece are key to this skill. Tutors also choose portions of the lessons to teach, and take the student's writing folders home, so they can give written feedback to students about their writing...*
>
> (Greenfield and Schwertman, pages 8-9)

•Provide support and an opportunity to share ideas between the two teams of teachers.

Administrative support for co-teaching teams--Two people from the administrative team of the Centers for Reading and Writing supported the two Manhattan teachers and another team of two supported the Bronx teachers. This support involved meeting with the co-teachers several times during each cycle, observing at least two classes per cycle, and helping with pre and post interviews and testing when needed. In addition, the administrative support people were available by phone for any issues of problems the teachers wanted to discuss.

Staff development for the writing teachers--In order to provide the two writing teachers teams with an opportunity to share ideas with each other and with other staff people, two sets of meetings were scheduled each cycle. Several meetings took place involving only the writing teachers and the administrative support team. These meetings involved issues particular to the writing classes and the teacher/tutor education model being used in those classes.

We also invited the writing teachers to join meetings involving the adult basic education teachers working with classes during the week and other Centers for Reading and Writing staff members so that the writing teachers could develop a fuller understanding of the overall program and could exchange ideas with other people on staff.

In addition, writing teachers are invited--although not required to attend--a wide variety of staff development activities that take place for other staff people in the program.

Student Reactions to Class

The majority of students seemed to feel that the class had helped them improve both their self-image and their writing. Here are some of the oral and written comments students made at the end of the class:

- *"On June 20, 1987, the writing workshop becomes history, a reflection of good times and bad times, of sharing intimate feelings and writing practice.*

Feelings of encouragement, empathy, and disappointment, as well as writing improvement that each workshop member shared...If only we believed in ourselves, by continuing practicing our writing, we can conquer our fear."

- *"I'm not too afraid...I'm discovering more things. It's like magic. It's coming out. It's like another person trying...It's like I discovered a new world."*

- *"You helped me read and write better. I certainly feel better about me...I can sometimes think better than I used to. I can write things better by myself than before entering this Saturday program.*

- *"All of it has given me confidence. My worry about spelling has diminished. It's helped me come out of my shell...the other night, for the first time, I sat down and wrote without shaking...that was a giant step..."*

(Brooke, pages 2-3)

Teacher Reactions

The teachers also noticed changes taking place in the students over the course of a class cycle:

- *"At the start of cycle 2, many of the new students voiced concern that their problems with grammar and spelling would not be addressed. The students who had been in cycle 1, vigorously defended starting with invented spelling and free writing, worrying about grammar and spelling later. They said that this is one thing that made our program different--our approach to writing freed students up to get their ideas down first and then worry about the spelling and grammar later."*

- *"In the way we structured the classroom, students worked in small groups or pairs and helped teach each other a lot. Students came to see themselves as teachers, and realized they had knowledge."*

- *"A couple of students, like David came into the program with very stiff writing styles based on the five paragraph essay which was the only writing they knew. David's biggest complaint was that he didn't know how to express himself. He was totally confined by the form. Through this approach, David finally broke out of the fixed form he knew and began writing letters. The letters lent themselves to a freer-flowing narrative style that better reflected David's voice."*

- *"Another example is Amparo, who wanted only to work on her grammar when she first came in order to improve her writing of medical reports. However, after writing a personal narrative which the group loved, Amparo said to me, 'I realize I am good at writing and I really love it, and that I can work on grammar on any kind of piece.' She began taking her pieces of writing home and sharing them with friends and family. The writing program was more than just a place for Amparo to come and slog through grammar. It was a place where she could enjoy coming for personal fulfillment as well. Students learn that they can accomplish both practical and personal goals simultaneously."*

- *"This leads to the observation that students repeatedly say that writing makes them feel better about themselves. They gain self-esteem, and confidence. The majority of students also stress the personal value of writing--qualities such as expression of one's thoughts and feelings, or that of sharing writing with other which builds friendships. In short, writing fulfills personal, human needs and values which enriches people's lives, above and beyond the more material gains of acquiring a job or entrance into college."*

(Greenfield and Schwertman, pages 17-18)

Plans for the Future

In general, we feel pleased with how the Saturday program is going. There is a lot of interest and enthusiasm on the part of students who have attended the classes, and they often talk about the changes in both how they feel about themselves and their writing. We believe that Saturday classes provide an

additional educational opportunity that not many programs offer, and can enable students already in an adult basic education program to increase the number of classes they attend and therefore progress more quickly. It also provides students whose programs emphasize writing less to gain some additional knowledge and skills in this area.

There are several issues we would like to continue working on order to improve the program:

•**Additional recruitment efforts for students**--Since it proved difficult to get enough students from our existing waiting list for the classes this fall, it is obviously time to repeat and extend our recruitment efforts. We hesitated to do this before actually contacting students who had already signed up, since we didn't know how many of them were still interested and hated to have new students go on a waiting list for another six months. It's clear now, though, after contacting the students, that is time to let other programs know we anticipate spaces for our next cycle beginning in April of 1988.

•**Additional recruitment efforts for teachers and tutors**--Although we have been getting several interested people each cycle, the majority of people attending have been volunteer tutors in our own program. This is fine, but we would also like to include more teachers and tutors from other programs. This, too, suggests the need for trying additional program recruitment efforts even though we have been getting a limited response from other programs.

•**The need to look more closely at students who participate for several cycles**--we need to explore in more depth how long it seems to be useful for a student to repeat this Saturday class. Since it it necessary to repeat some of the basic writing strategies each cycle, it may not extend a student's knowledge and skills in writing beyond a certain point. Students seem to improve their skills for two or three cycles, but we're not sure participation continues to be useful after that.

•**The need to look more closely at the writing process of adult literacy students--** As a result of our first Library Services and Construction Act writing grant, we were excited by the possibility of a more in-depth look at the writing process of several adult students, and included a modest study as part of our proposal for the next fiscal year. We fell that more information is this area would be extremely useful to us in our program and to the literacy field.

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